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Ministry of Forests and Range

## FOREST AGREEMENT TO AID IN BEETLE, FIRE MANAGEMENT

PRINCE GEORGE – A community forest agreement to be issued by the Province will help the City of Prince George better manage the impacts of the mountain pine beetle and the risk of interface fire, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"We are issuing this licence because removing dead and dying trees will improve the safety of all Prince George residents," said Coleman. "Protecting the health and safety of all British Columbians is a key part of our provincial beetle action plan."

The agreement will allow the city to harvest up to 12,000 cubic metres of timber per year from about 4,000 hectares of public forest land within municipal boundaries. The city's forest management goals are to address stands infested by mountain pine beetle and to reduce the fuel build-up in green stands.

"The City of Prince George has taken a comprehensive, constructive approach in dealing with the mountain pine beetle and fire risks within the community," said Pat Bell, Minister of Agriculture and Lands and MLA for Prince George North. "They are to be congratulated."

"This licence will enable the removal of thousands of affected trees, which will improve safety for all residents," said John Rustad, MLA Prince George-Omineca. "It builds on all the work the city and its partners, including the Ministry of Forests and Range, have already done."

The agreement builds on the $1.2 million in funding provided by the Province in April 2005 to support forest rehabilitation and fuel management within the city.

"The City of Prince George has the most forest within its boundaries of any community in B.C.," said Shirley Bond, Minister of Education and MLA for Prince George-Mount Robson. "They've asked for a tool to help them manage those forests, and this agreement delivers it."

"A community forest is a forest for the people of Prince George," said Mayor Colin Kinsley. "This agreement will allow us to manage not only for fire and mountain pine beetle, but it will also provide us with increasing recreational opportunities, sustainability in the form of biomass for community energy, and timber harvest opportunities for value-added businesses."

Since August 2004, government has provided new or expanded community forest opportunities for 27 communities across the Province. These agreements give local governments, community groups and First Nations the opportunity to more fully participate in the stewardship of local forest resources.

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